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SUBJECT: GEORGIA: 2009 COUNTRY REPORT ON TERRORISM

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GEORGIA

In 2009, Georgia continued to support U.S. efforts in the fight against terrorism, increasing its role by providing a battalion of Georgian soldiers, approximately 750 troops, to be trained by the U.S. in preparation for a spring 2010 deployment as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. The Georgian government has agreed to deploy these forces without national caveats, and they are expected to deploy with U.S. Marines in Helmand province. This is in addition to 173 Georgian troops already serving as part of ISAF with French and one servicemember serving with Turkish forces. Additionally, Georgia has granted blanket flight clearance for all U.S. military aircraft engaged in operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Georgia remains an important counterterrorism partner for the United States, and it independently confronts counterterrorism issues that arise on its own territory. Russian claims of Georgian support for Chechen terrorists, and harboring of such individuals in the Pankisi Gorge, have proven baseless, and the Georgian government has made significant efforts to prove to the international community the falsity of these Russian allegations.

Border security operations and anti-corruption efforts at border checkpoints remained high priorities for the Georgian government, with its continued focus on countering the smuggling of contraband such as money, drugs and weaponry that could support terrorism. Countering nuclear proliferation has been an essential goal of both the U.S. and Georgian governments, and joint efforts remained at a high level in 2009. Significant improvements to infrastructure at border crossing points and employment of Department of Energy's Second Line of Defense Program to detect radiation continued, and the new border crossing facility at Kazbegi/Larsi between Georgia and Russia was finished in September 2009 (although due to the state of relations between Georgia and Russia, the border remains closed). Additionally, seven remote border posts were completed in 2009, enhancing the security of the Georgian-Azeri border and further limiting illegal crossings. Also completed was the fifth and final radar station on the Black Sea coast, which will enhance Georgian capabilities to secure its maritime border and interdict potential smugglers and counter any terrorist threats from this direction. In 2009, the capabilities of the Georgian Border Police were improved, and its ability to monitor, patrol, and interdict criminals along the green borders was significantly enhanced. This was accomplished by the development of additional enforcement tools such as new communications equipment and protocols.

The situation in the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South

Ossetia remained largely unchanged in 2009, and the Georgian government does not control its international borders located between these regions and Russia. This lack of control allowed for unrestricted and unidentified flow of people, goods and other potentially dangerous items from Russia into Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The administrative boundary lines between Georgia and the conflict zones were furthered militarized in 2009 when Russia tasked FSB border guards to take over control from the de facto governments in both territories. Movement over these boundary lines was strictly controlled, although formal customs checks, security inspections or other CT procedures did not exist.

Separately, Russian officials accused the Georgian government of harboring terrorists in 2009 as terrorist attacks occurred in the north Caucasus; however, the Georgian government strongly denied such claims, worked with its allies such as the United States to disprove such claims, and called on the Russian government to provide proof for their suspicions.

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